



**NOAA** National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
U.S. Department of Commerce

## Congressional Brief: Sample of 2006 NOAA Activities

*"NOAA's work touches the daily lives of every person in the United States and in much of the world. From weather forecasts in the Midwest to fisheries management on the East Coast, from safe navigation to coastal services in the Gulf, from remote sensing to climate research and ocean exploration, NOAA's products and services contribute to the foundation of a healthy economy and affect approximately one-third of the nation's gross domestic product."*

- Vice Admiral Conrad Lautenbacher  
Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere  
and NOAA Administrator



### NOAA worked with Congress to support critical legislation including:

- Passage of the *Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act of 2006*. The reauthorized Act strengthens NOAA's ability to end overfishing and rebuild fish stocks.
- Passage of the *Tsunami Preparedness Act*, *National Integrated Drought Information System Act of 2006*, *Marine Debris Research, Prevention and Reduction Act*, and the *U.S. Tsunami Warning and Education Act*.

### Did you know? NOAA protects critical habitats and builds sustainable fisheries.

**June — NOAA Co-Manages Largest Marine Conservation Area in the World Encompassing Nearly 140,000 Square Miles.** The President issued "Proclamation 8031" and immediately provided comprehensive protection of the resources of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI). NWHI contains 4,500 square miles of relatively undisturbed coral reef habitat that is home to more than 7,000 species. Healthy coral reefs provide many benefits and in Hawaii alone, coral reefs contribute over \$172.1 million in value added to the economy.

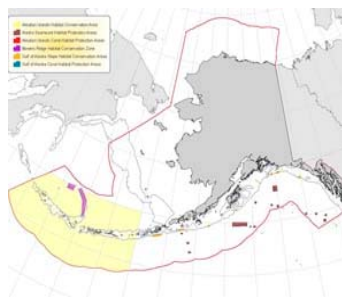
**June — NOAA Designates Essential Fish Habitat Area Covering 150,000 Square Miles Off West Coast.** The regulations under this plan prohibit fishing methods that can cause long-term damage to the ocean floor (such as bottom trawling), and are aimed at replenishing fish stocks. It covers an area from Canada to Mexico, out to 200 nautical miles in some places.



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*June* — **NOAA Reports on the Status of U.S. Marine Fisheries for 2005.** Each year, NOAA announces the state of U.S. fisheries to inform Congress and the American public of the agency's progress in rebuilding overfished stocks to sustainable population levels. The annual report tracks both population levels and harvest rates for species caught in federal marine waters, between three and 200 miles off U.S. coasts.

In 2005, NOAA scientists determined population levels for 206 fish stocks and multi-species groupings known as complexes. Of these, 152 (74 percent) were not overfished. NOAA scientists also determined the harvest rates for 237 stocks and found that 192 (81 percent) were not subject to overfishing.



*July* — **NOAA Establishes 279,114 Square Nautical Mile Marine Protected Area in Alaska and Bans Bottom Trawling.** Resulting from a February 2005 recommendation by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, the Aleutian Islands Conservation Area establishes a network of fishing closures in the Aleutian Islands and Gulf of Alaska. The area protects habitat for cold-water corals and other sensitive features that are slow to recover once disturbed by fishing gear or other activities.

These measures complement a successful fishery management strategy put forward by the *U.S. Ocean Action Plan* and incorporates conservative harvest restrictions, marine protected areas, limits on bycatch, rigorous monitoring and strong scientific research programs.

*November* — **NOAA Releases 10-Year Aquaculture Plan for Public Comment.** NOAA supports the development of a domestic marine aquaculture industry in the United States to meet the nation's growing demand for seafood. Right now, the United States imports over 70 percent of our seafood and half of those imports are products of aquaculture that contribute to the nation's \$8 billion seafood deficit.

*November* — **NOAA Builds 800-Acre Barrier Island in Louisiana's Plaquemines Parish.** Despite delays caused by Hurricane Katrina, NOAA is on schedule to complete the first phase of the 800-acre barrier island. In one of the largest island restoration projects ever done by NOAA, workers are dredging and performing major earth-moving activities on Chaland Island to create beach and marsh habitat that will help protect Louisiana's coastal communities and infrastructure from the devastating effects of wind, waves, and flooding.

Wetlands and barrier islands are our first defense against storms. This project will help absorb surging water and wind during storms, protecting our national energy assets and Louisiana's coastal communities.



*November* — **NOAA Leads U.S. Push for Bluefin Tuna Recovery.** The United States made a bold attempt to ensure the future of eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna during the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, or ICCAT. The United States fought hard for tougher conservation measures to end overfishing of this stock during a meeting of the international commission that manages bluefin and other tuna and tuna-like species. The 2006 stock assessment for eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean bluefin tuna included grim news that the stock is being severely over-harvested and will collapse if strong conservation measures are not adopted and implemented immediately.

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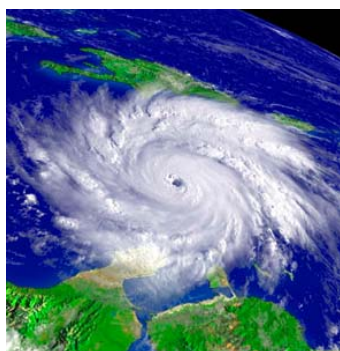
***Did you know? NOAA conducts critical research and expeditions to advance our understanding of the oceans and atmosphere.***

*May* — **NOAA Launches New Environmental Satellite.** NOAA successfully launched a new geostationary satellite (called GOES-13) designed to track hurricanes and other severe weather affecting the nation. The satellite will provide critical observations and pictures that enhance the nation's weather prediction capabilities. It will supply data critical for fast, accurate forecasts and warnings for severe weather, including tornadoes, winter storms and hurricanes. Additionally, it will also detect solar storm activity, relay distress signals from emergency beacons, monitor the oceans, and scan the landscape for the latest drought and flood conditions.

*July* — **NOAA Accepts Delivery of New Fisheries Survey Vessel.** NOAA took delivery of the *Henry B. Bigelow*, one of a new class of fisheries survey vessels being built under contract with VT Halter Marine Inc., in Pascagoula, Miss. The vessel will support NOAA research efforts in conservation and management of fisheries and marine ecosystems primarily in northeastern U.S. waters. Like its sister ship *Oscar Dyson*, *Bigelow's* high-tech capabilities make it one of the most advanced fisheries research ships in the world and will enable NOAA to conduct its fisheries research and assessment mission in New England with greater accuracy and cost efficiency.



*July* — **NOAA Scientists Discover Deep-Sea Corals in the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary.** Further study of this area shows promise in expanding our understanding of the ecological role of deep coral habitats and perhaps might provide insights into future affects of climate change and ocean acidification on such important ecosystems.



*August* — **NOAA and U.S. Air Force Adopt Cutting-Edge Weather Research and Forecast Model.** An advanced weather forecast model that predicts several types of extreme weather with substantially improved accuracy has been adopted for day-to-day operational use by NOAA and U.S. Air Force weather forecasters.

The high-resolution weather research and forecasting model, or WRF, is the first model to serve as both the backbone of the nation's public weather forecasts and as a tool for cutting-edge weather research. Because this model fulfills both functions, it is easier for research findings to be translated into improved operational models leading to better forecasts.

*December* — **NOAA Scientists Identify Changes in Grass Shrimp Populations as Tool for Measuring Estuarine Health.** NOAA scientists have found a direct link between estuarine sediment contaminant levels and grass shrimp populations. The study performed at three sites in coastal South Carolina showed grass shrimp population densities and shrimp size were depressed in areas with the greatest concentrations of contaminants. Grass shrimp are widely distributed throughout the tidal marsh system and are an ecologically important species. This type of basic research is critically important to NOAA and to coastal resource managers in making informed environmental decisions as we seek to promote wise use of our coastal resources.





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## ***Did you know? NOAA protects lives and livelihoods.***

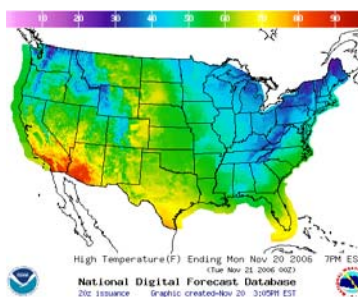
*March* — **NOAA Completes Great Lakes Operational Forecast System.** The System aids navigation, boating, search and rescue, and emergency response by providing lake carriers, mariners, port managers, emergency response teams and recreational boaters with present and future conditions of water levels, water currents and water temperatures.



*July* - **NOAA Satellites Help Save Lives.** NOAA satellites helped save 272 people from potentially life-jeopardizing emergencies throughout the United States and its surrounding waters in 2006 — up from 222 the previous year. NOAA satellites and search and rescue staff are prepared to handle distress signals from emergency locator beacons. NOAA's polar and geostationary satellites, along with Russia's Cospas spacecraft, are part of the high-tech, international Search and Rescue Satellite-Aided Tracking System, called COSPAS-SARSAT. Since its creation in 1982, COSPAS-SARSAT has been credited with more than 20,300 rescues worldwide, including 5,396 within the United States and its surrounding waters.

*September* — **NOAA Provides 80,000 NOAA All-Hazards Weather Radios to Every Public School (K-12) in America.** The radios operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week, sounding an alarm alerting school personnel to hazardous weather conditions and other national or area-specific emergencies, even when other means of communication are disabled.

*December* — **NOAA Increases Tsunami Warning Capability.** NOAA deployed six new Deep-ocean Assessment and Reporting of Tsunami, or DART, stations in the southwest Pacific. The new stations provide increased lead-time for tsunami detection to the U.S. coastal areas at most risk of tsunamis traveling long distances, including the coastlines of Hawaii, Alaska, Washington, Oregon, and California. NOAA has deployed 25 DART stations in U.S. waters; installed 15 new and upgraded 33 existing tide stations; completed inundation models for 17 communities; and recognized 26 new TsunamiReady communities.



*Year Round* — **NOAA Issues Forecasts, Warnings, Alerts, and Outlooks.** NOAA prepares and issues millions of weather, water, and climate forecasts, warnings, alerts and outlooks to help protect the lives and livelihoods of every American. These include:

- Daily national, regional, and local weather forecasts and warnings
- Hurricane, tornado, and inland flooding warnings and watches
- Seasonal weather outlooks for hurricanes, wildland fire, drought, temperature, and precipitation
- Tsunami alerts and warnings
- Marine and aviation forecasts, advisories, and warnings
- Space weather warnings, watches, alerts, and predictions